

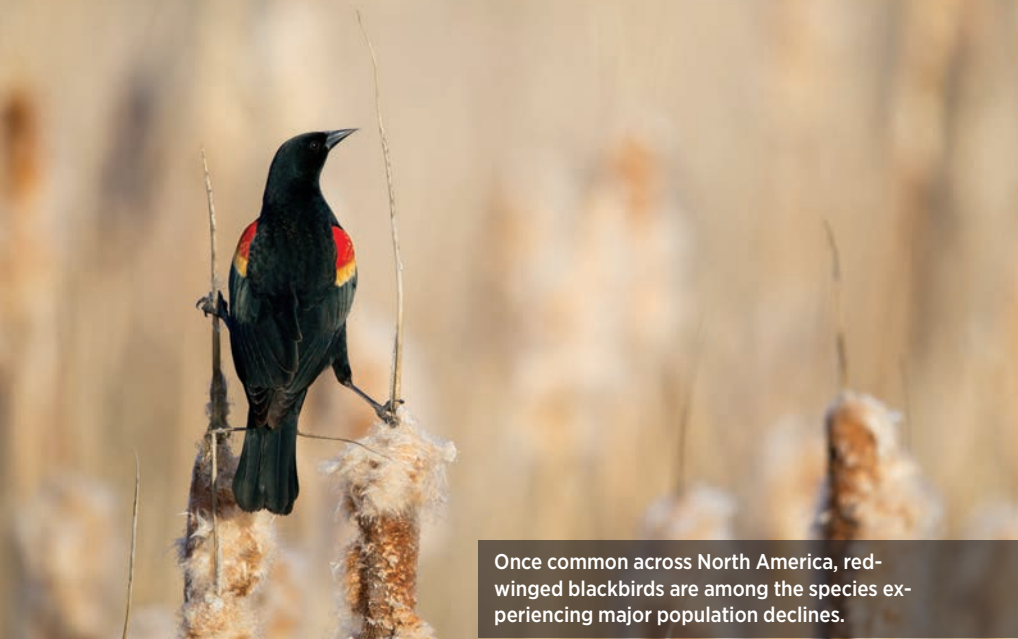


22 Amount, in millions of dollars, of the maintenance and infrastructure backlog at Montana’s state parks

Mush!

Riding in a dog sled is a rush. It’s just you, the musher, and 10 dogs running their hearts out along a packed snow trail. “The dogs are going nuts with excitement before we take off, but once they start running it’s just so quiet and peaceful we call it the ‘magic carpet ride,’” says Mat Stimpson, who owns and operates Absaroka Dogsled Treks in Paradise Valley with his wife, Hannah Vogel.

Find dog sledding operators and dog sled race locations at visitmt.com by searching for “dog sledding.”



Once common across North America, red-winged blackbirds are among the species experiencing major population declines.

WILDLIFE LOSS

“Really wrong” bird losses

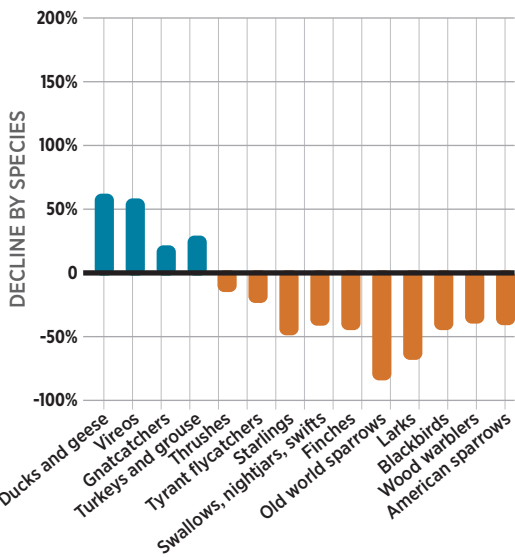
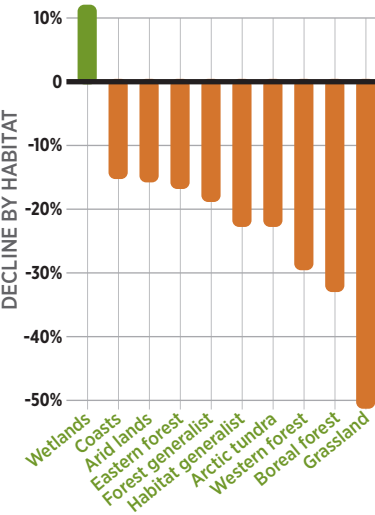
If you’re not seeing or hearing as many meadowlarks, sparrows, or blackbirds as you did a few decades ago, it’s not your imagination. A major new study reports that birds living or breeding in the United States and Canada have declined an average 29 percent since 1970.

The study, published in the September issue of *Science*, reports that human actions such as plowing grasslands and draining wetlands have contributed to declines in most North American bird populations. The result is a total loss of 2.9 billion individual birds during the past half century. Most of the lost birds are common species, including house sparrows and red-winged blackbirds. “If we can’t keep those populations healthy,

then something’s really wrong,” Ken Rosenberg, a conservation scientist at Cornell Lab of Ornithology, who was the study’s main author, told the *Wall Street Journal*.

Hardest hit were grassland birds, with a 53 percent decline, including the loss of 139 million individual western and eastern meadowlarks. Forest bird species showed declines of more than 1 billion birds since 1970. Red-winged blackbird numbers dropped by 92 million. Other major declines occurred among chimney swifts, grasshopper sparrows, horned larks, and green herons.

One bright spot was an increase in waterfowl, due largely to conservation efforts by duck hunters to protect key wetlands and grasslands used for nesting and rearing. ■



K. ROSENBERG ET AL., SCIENCE, ADAPTED BY LUKE DURAN/MONTANA OUTDOORS

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: CARTOON BY MIKE MORAN; DONALD M. JONES; SCOTT STURKOL; EAGLE CLAW; SHUTTERSTOCK

RECOMMENDED READING

Curl up with a good one

Here at *Montana Outdoors*, we love books. These, all by Montana authors, are worth reading this holiday season, giving as gifts, or both. For fans of:

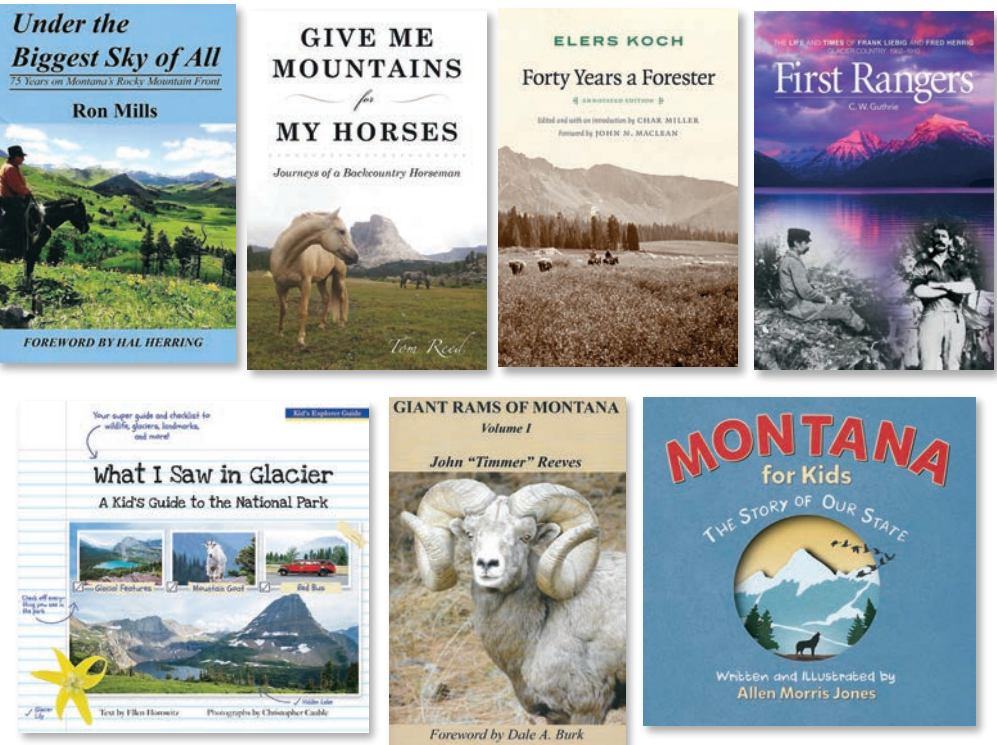
- Outfitter stories**

Under the Biggest Sky of All: 75 Years on Montana’s Rocky Mountain Front
by Ron Mills of Augusta
- Horses**

Give Me Mountains for My Horses: Journeys of a Backcountry Horseman
by Tom Reed of Pony
- U.S. Forest Service history**

Forty Years a Forester
by the late Elers Koch of Seeley Lake
- Forest rangers**

First Rangers: The Life and Times of Frank Liebig and Fred Herrig, Glacier Country, 1902-1910
by C.W. Guthrie of Missoula



- National parks for kids**

What I Saw in Glacier: A Kid’s Guide to the National Park
by Ellen Horowitz of Whitefish
Winner of the High Plains Book Award, Children’s Book category
- Trophy bighorn sheep**

Giant Rams of Montana
by John “Timmer” Reeves of Butte
- Fun history guides for kids**

Montana for Kids: The Story of Our State
by Allen Morris Jones of Bozeman
Winner of the Western Writers of America’s Storyteller Spur Award for Illustrated Children’s Book.



Claw your way out of an ice hole

Breaking through weak or thin ice on a lake, pond, or reservoir can be terrifying or even fatal. Often the wet ice around the hole is too slippery to provide any grip for pulling yourself out of the frigid water.

The best way to survive falling through ice is to carry a pair of ice claws. Ice claws, or picks, are metal spikes set in plastic or wood dowels attached by a cord for wearing around your neck. The inexpensive safety tools are sold in major sporting good stores and online.

Tips for using ice claws (from the ice safety experts at the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources):

- ▶ If you break through the ice, try to remain calm.
- ▶ Turn toward the direction you came from, where the ice is likely stronger.
- ▶ Dig the metal points into the ice and, while kicking your feet, pull yourself onto the surface by sliding forward.
- ▶ Roll several yards away from the area of weak ice.
- ▶ To prevent deadly hypothermia, get to a heated shelter or vehicle, change into warm, dry clothing, and consume warm, non-alcoholic drinks.
- ▶ Call 911 and seek medical attention if you feel disoriented or have uncontrollable shivering.
- ▶ If a buddy breaks through, tell them to “Stay calm” and that “We’ll get you out of there in a second.” Toss them your ice claws and explain how to use them.

